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## NEWS: INTERNATIONAL

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# Palestinian charity in UK under attack

By Julian Ozzane in Tel Aviv  
and Clay Harris in London

Israel yesterday stepped up its attack on foreign fund-raising for Palestinian causes. Israeli military intelligence claimed that Interpal, a UK-based charity whose bank accounts were frozen last week by the Charity Commission, had masterminded fund-raising for the Hamas Islamic movement in Europe.

Israeli police, meanwhile, released documents about financial support given to the families of three Hamas military activists by two Nazareth-based charities which they claim are funded by Interpal.

A senior military officer said Interpal, also known as the Palestinian Relief and Development Fund, raised money exclusively for Hamas institutions and directly provided support to families of Hamas guerrillas and sui-

cide bombers. "Interpal is the main source of funds for Hamas outside the [Palestinian] territories," he said.

In London, Mr Abdul Rahman Daya, Interpal chairman, said: "What is their proof? I don't know what they are talking about. I don't know what the Israelis are trying to achieve."

Charity Commission officials will today visit Interpal's offices in north London to study its records. After a meeting with Interpal trustees yesterday, the commission said: "The charity can continue to function and fund projects undertaken on their behalf by various Palestinian charities." For the time being, all spending must be approved by the commission.

The Israeli military officer alleged that Interpal was directly connected to the Finance Committee of Hamas, which decides the spending priorities of the movement together with the Internal Committee, and gave direc-

tions to other Hamas fund-raising groups in Europe. "All the European funds are co-ordinated by Interpal," he said. Mr Daya described this contention as "rubbish".

Last week police named Interpal and Al Aqsa, based in Germany, as the source of funds to Mr Suleiman Agbariah, who has been placed under house arrest by Israeli authorities and had his telephone cut off pending the results of an investigation. Police say have they have more than 60 cases proving that Mr Agbariah's charities - the Islamic Salvation Fund and the Islamic Rescue Fund - gave money to the families of Hamas guerrillas.

They provided documents from three cases which they allege prove a link between Mr Agbariah and his charities with known activists in the Izz el-Deen al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas which has claimed responsibility for recent sui-

cide attacks in Israel. Mr Daya said neither charity appeared in Interpal's own records or bank records.

The documents, written in Arabic, are application forms filled out by the families of Hamas "martyrs" seeking aid from Mr Agbariah's funds. All three are from families of young men who died in Hamas military activities. One application came from the mother of 20-year-old Iman Salah Salame Atallah, who died in a suicide mission in Gaza in 1993, in which two Israeli soldiers were killed.

Police say in all cases money was approved from Mr Agbariah's charities, often more significant sums than recommended by charity field workers in the documents.

The intelligence officer said Israel had material evidence that some of the money sent by Interpal to registered schools, clinics, orphanages and welfare societies had been diverted to

the families of Hamas guerrillas.

He said several lists of orphans who receive charity included people above the age of 18 who were known Hamas activists.

In London, Mr Daya said Interpal supported no orphans over the age of 15. Asked if any of the 36 charities which Interpal funds were linked to Hamas, he said: "Maybe." Interpal did not screen recipients to exclude those with links to Hamas activists. "A poor family is a poor family," Mr Daya said. "We do not check on why the family has been made poor."

The Israeli officer said it was impossible to divulge material evidence because it would put informants at risk. But he said evidence had been passed to the UK government and other European countries which proved the link between the European charities and funding of the Hamas military campaign.

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